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(71) Applicant
Tokai TRW & Company Limited (Japan),
No 1203 Aza Shimotamonaka, Ushiyama-cho, Kasugai-shi,
Aichi-ken, Japan

(72) Inventor
Kunio Takeuchi

(74) Agent and/or Address for Service
Stevens, Hewlett & Perkins, 5 Quality Court, Chancery
Lane, London WC2A 1HZ

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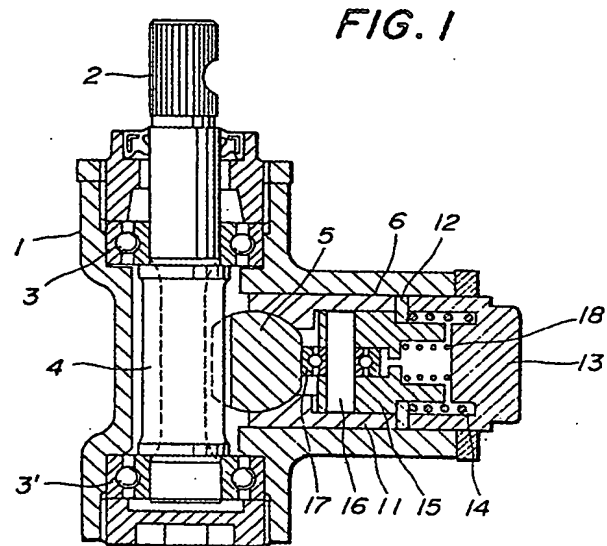
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(54) Steering mechanism for
automobile

(57) A steering mechanism for an automobile comprises a housing 1 defining an opening 6, a column shaft 2 rotatably mounted in the housing, a pinion 4 on the column shaft, a rack bar 5 engaging the pinion, a first yoke 11 slidable within the opening 6, a yoke stopper 13 fitted in the opening, and a second yoke 15 disposed within the first yoke. The first yoke 11 has a ring 12 at one end; a first spring 14 is interposed between the ring 12 and the yoke stopper 13, and a second spring 18 is interposed between the second yoke 15 and the yoke stopper. The second yoke 15 has a roller 17 at one end adapted to abut against the rack bar 5. A third spring (19 Figure 4) may be interposed between the first and second yokes.



The drawings originally filed were informal and the print here reproduced is taken from a later filed formal copy.

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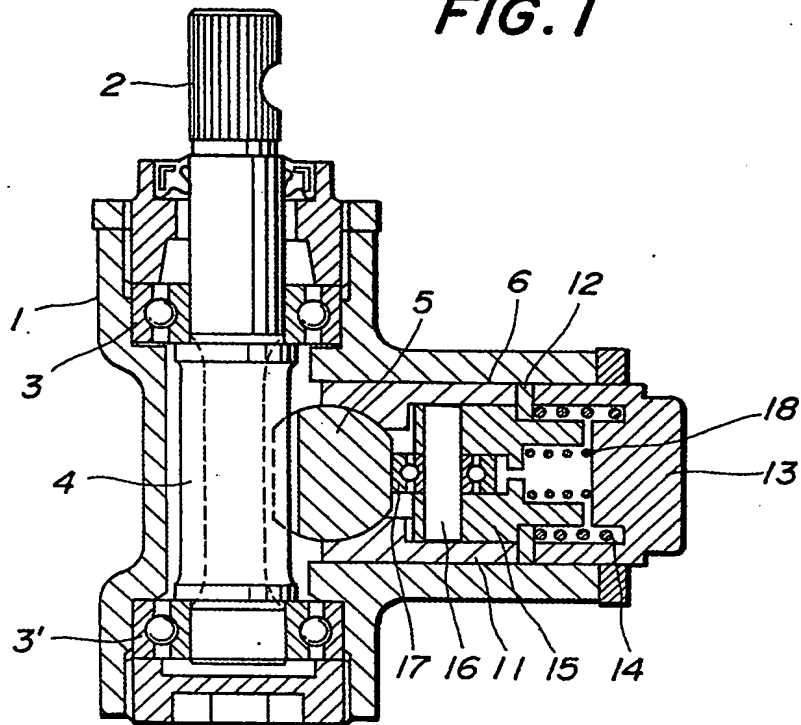
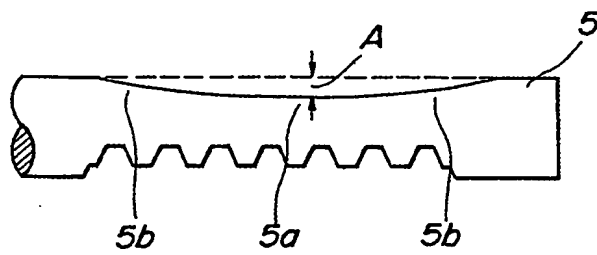
FIG. 1**FIG. 2**

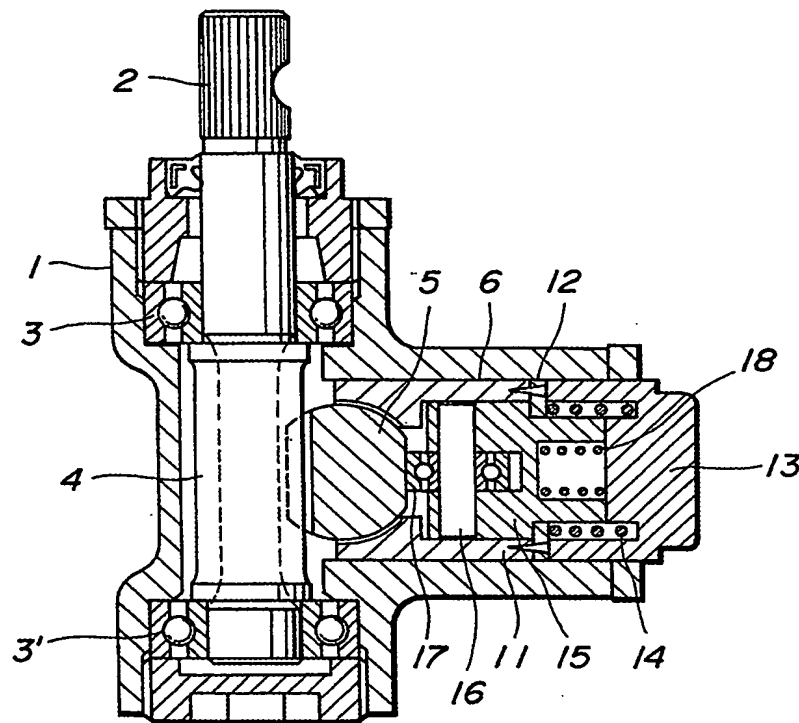
FIG. 3

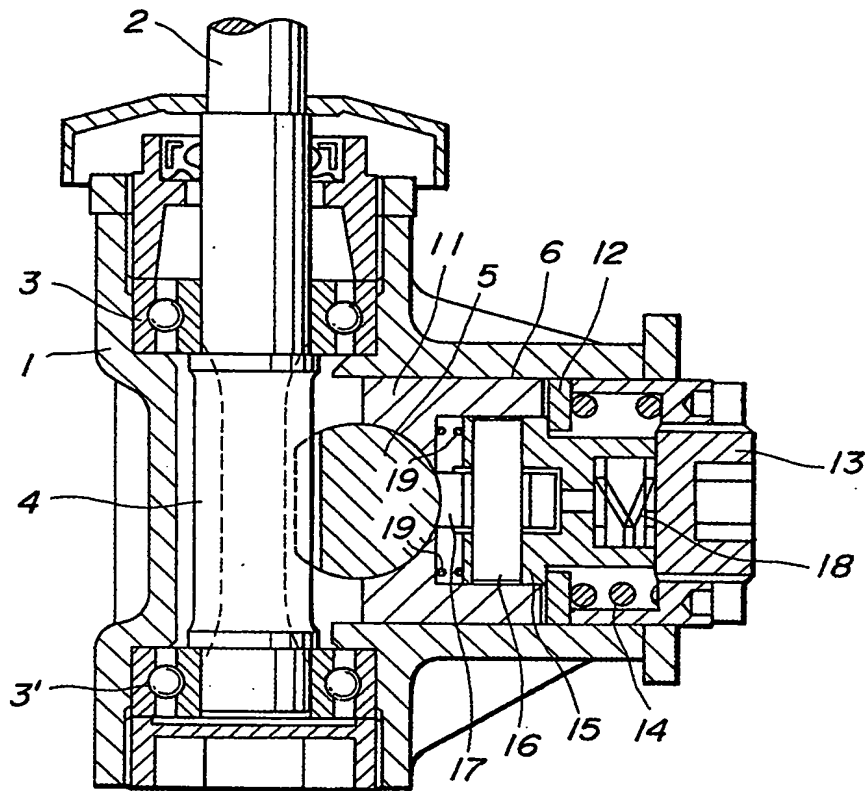
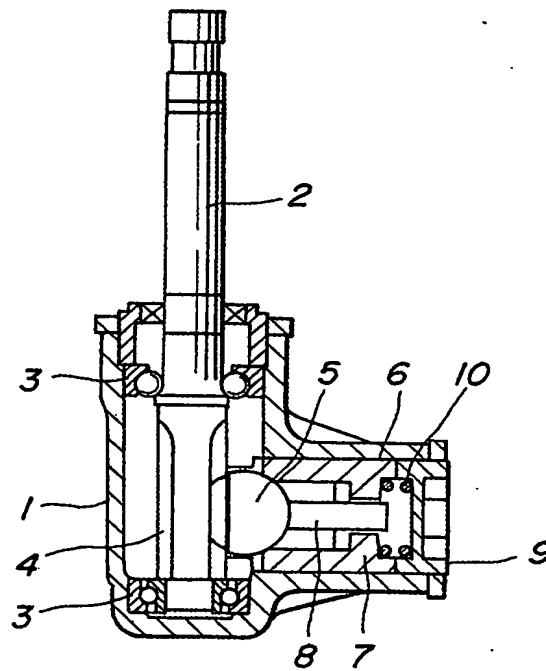
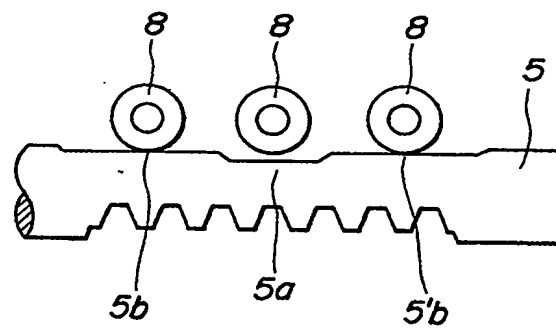
FIG. 4

FIG. 5**FIG. 6**

SPECIFICATION

Steering mechanism for automobile

5 This invention relates to a steering mechanism for an automobile and more particularly, to an improved steering mechanism for an automobile which is adapted to eliminate dullness when the automobile is running straight and reduce required
10 steering force when high load is applied to the steering mechanism.

There have been known a variety of prior art steering mechanisms for automobiles and one of the prior art steering mechanisms is shown in Figure 5 of the accompanying drawings. The prior art steering mechanism generally comprises a housing 1 in which a column shaft 2 is rotatably mounted by means of bearings 3, 3'. A pinion 4 is mounted on the column shaft 2 and a rack bar 5 engages the pinion 4 substantially at right angles to the pinion. The housing 1 defines an opening 6 behind the rack bar 5 and a support yoke 7 is received in the opening 6 for axially slidable movement therein. The support yoke 7 has a roller 8 rotatably
20 mounted within the yoke and a spring 10 is interposed between the support yoke 7 and a yoke stopper 9 fitted in the opening 6 at one or the outer end of the opening so as to normally bias the support yoke 7 towards the rack bar 5.

30 However, in the prior art steering mechanism having the components constructed and arranged as described hereinabove, the central area 5a of one side of the rack bar 5 is recessed so that the roller 8 will not abut against the rack bar 5, but can abut against the opposite ends 5b of the recessed central area 5a as shown in Figure 6. Furthermore, in the prior art steering mechanism, the inner end of the support yoke 7 abuts against the central area 5a of the rack bar 5, but does not abut against
35 the opposite ends 5b of the central area.

Therefore, the prior art steering mechanism has the drawback that under high load conditions, the efficiency is low at the central area of the rack bar and when the steering wheel is rotated, the inner end of the support yoke 7 abuts against the central area of the rack bar whereas the roller 8 abuts against the opposite ends of the rack bar central area whereby the abutment relationship with respect to the rack bar transfers between the support
45 yoke and roller and thus, the transfer is not smooth. Furthermore, the prior art steering mechanism has the drawback that in order to make the rack bar rigid, if the spring 10 is applied an increased load thereto, the support yoke contacts the
50 rack bar with an excessively high friction.

Therefore, the present invention is to provide an improved steering mechanism for an automobile which can eliminate the drawbacks inherent in the prior art automobile steering mechanism as referred to hereinabove.

According to the present invention, a first yoke is slidably received for axial movement in the opening defined in the housing with one end thereof facing the rack bar, a ring is secured to or faces the
60 other end of the first yoke, a yoke stopper is fitted

in the opening at the end thereof opposite from the rack bar, a first spring is interposed between the ring and yoke stopper to normally bias the first yoke towards the rack bar, a second yoke is disposed within the first yoke and has a roller at one end thereof for abutting against the rack bar and a second spring is interposed between the other end of the second yoke and the yoke stopper for normally biasing the second yoke towards the rack bar.
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The above and other objects and attendant advantages of the present invention will be more readily apparent to those skilled in the art from a reading of the following detailed description in conjunction with the accompanying drawings which show preferred embodiments of the invention for illustration purpose only, but not for limiting the scope of the same in any way.

Figure 1 is a vertically sectional view of a first preferred embodiment of the steering mechanism for an automobile constructed in accordance with the present invention;

Figure 2 is a side elevational view of the rack bar employed in said steering mechanism of Figure 1;

Figure 3 is similar to Figure 1, but shows the rack bar in a position displaced from the position of the bar as shown in Figure 1;

Figure 4 is a vertically sectional view of a second preferred embodiment of the steering mechanism for an automobile constructed in accordance with the present invention;

Figure 5 is a vertically sectional view on a reduced scale of a prior art steering mechanism for an automobile; and

Figure 6 is a side elevational view of the roller and rack bar employed in the prior art steering mechanism of Figure 5.

Referring first to Figures 1 to 3 inclusive in which the first embodiment of the steering mechanism for an automobile according to the present invention is shown, the steering mechanism generally comprises a housing 1 in which a column shaft 2 is rotatably supported by means of bearings 3, 3' which are in turn supported in the housing 1 in the conventional manner. A pinion 4 is mounted on the column shaft 2 and a rack bar 5 is provided in engagement with the pinion 4 at substantially right angles to the former. An opening 6 is defined in the housing 1 for the purpose to be described hereinafter. The components mentioned above are identical with the respectively corresponding components of the above-mentioned prior art steering mechanism and further description on the corresponding components will be omitted herein.

In the first embodiment illustrated in Figures 1 to 3 inclusive, a first yoke 11 is received in the opening 6 for axially slidable movement therein and the yoke 11 is adapted to abut at one end thereof against the side of the rack bar 5 opposite from the pinion 4 and the other end of the yoke has a ring 12 secured thereto. A yoke stopper 13 is fitted in the opening 6 at one or the outer end of the opening and a first spring 14 is interposed between the ring 12 and the yoke stopper 13 to normally bias the first yoke 11 and the ring 12 towards the rack
125 130

bar 5 inwardly in the opening 6. Disposed within the first yoke 11 is a second yoke 15 which has a rotary shaft 16 mounted at the inner end of the second yoke. A roller 17 is rotatably mounted on the rotary shaft 16 and abuts against the rack bar 5. A second spring 18 is interposed between the yoke stopper 13 and the second yoke 15 to normally bias the roller 17 towards the rack bar 5.

In the first embodiment of the automobile steering mechanism according to the present invention having the components constructed and arranged as mentioned hereinabove, as shown in Figure 2, the central area of the side of the rack bar 5 where the first yoke 11 and the roller 17 abut is recessed as shown by reference numeral 5a and the opposite ends 5b of the recess are gradually curved to provide a difference in level A. As shown in Figure 1, when the rack bar 5 is in engagement at the central area 5a thereof with the pinion 4, the first yoke 11 and the roller 17 mounted on the second yoke 15 are pressed against the rack bar 5 under the biasing force provided by the first and second springs 14, 18, respectively.

Thus, the rack bar 5 is made rigid under a suitable friction provided by the abutment of the first yoke 11 and the roller 17 against the rack bar 5.

Figure 3 shows a high load condition under which the inner side of the rack bar 5 engages the pinion 4. However, under this condition, since only the roller 17 mounted on the second yoke 15 abuts against the rack bar 5 at one of the ends 5b of the rack bar 5 and thus, when the roller 17 frictionally moves downwardly, the roller pushes the ring 12 downwardly so as to disengage the first yoke 11 from the rack bar 5.

Thus, under the high load condition, the principal load is born by only the roller 17 to thereby attain a high efficiency.

Next referring to Figure 4 which shows the second embodiment of the automobile steering mechanism according to the present invention. The second embodiment also generally comprises a housing 1 in which a column shaft 2 is supported by means of bearings 3, 3' which are in turn supported in the housing 1 in the conventional manner. A pinion 4 is mounted on the column shaft 2 and a rack bar 5 is provided in engagement with the pinion 4 at substantially right angles to the former. An opening 6 is defined in the housing 1 for the same purpose as described in connection with the first embodiment. A first yoke 11 is received in the opening 6 for axially slidable movement therein and the yoke 11 is adapted to abut at one end thereof against the rack bar 5 and the other end of the yoke has a ring 12 secured thereto. A yoke stopper 13 is fitted in the opening 6 at one or the outer end of the opening and a first spring 14 is interposed between the ring 12 and the yoke stopper 13 to normally bias the first yoke 11 and the ring 12 towards the rack bar 5 inwardly in the opening 6. Disposed within the first yoke 11 is a second yoke 15 which has a rotary shaft 16 mounted at the inner end of the second yoke. A roller 17 is rotatably mounted on the rotary shaft 16 and abuts against the rack bar 5. A second

spring 18 is interposed between the yoke stopper 13 and the second yoke 15 to normally bias the roller 17 towards the rack bar 5. The construction and arrangement of the components in the second embodiment described are identical with those of the corresponding components in the first embodiment. However, in the second embodiment, a third spring 19 is further interposed between the first and second yokes 11, 15 and the ring 12 is normally spaced from the first yoke 11.

Also in the second embodiment, like the first embodiment, the rack bar 5 is made rigid under a suitable friction by the abutment of the first yoke 11 and the roller 17 against the central area 5a of the side of the rack bar opposite from the pinion 4 and under a high load condition, since the principal load is born by only the roller 17, a high efficiency can be attained. Furthermore, since the third spring 19 is interposed between the first and second yokes 11, 15 to normally cause the rack bar 5 and the first yoke 11 to contact each other under a low load condition, the first yoke 11 is prevented from rattling.

As clear from the foregoing description on the preferred embodiments of the present invention, according to the present invention, since the rack bar is supported at the central area thereof by the roller and the first yoke, the rack bar is made rigid and a pinion torque at a proper value is provided. And since the rack bar is supported at the opposite ends thereof by only the roller, the frictional force is low and the efficiency is high. Thus, under a high load condition, a high efficiency is attained throughout the whole stroke of the rack bar. Furthermore, since the first yoke abuts against the rack bar at the central area of the rack bar and does not abut against only the curved opposite ends of the rack bar, the load on the rack bar by the first yoke is gradual. The load to be applied to the rack bar by the roller increases from the central area towards the opposite ends of the rack bar and the load is principally born by the roller at the opposite ends of the rack bar.

The advantages of the present invention, as well as certain changes and modifications of the disclosed embodiments thereof, will be readily apparent to those skilled in the art. It is applicant's intention to cover by the claims all those changes and modifications which could be made to the embodiments of the invention herein chosen for the spirit and scope of the invention.

CLAIMS

1. A steering mechanism for an automobile which comprises a housing defining an opening therein, a column shaft rotatably mounted in said housing, a pinion mounted on said column shaft, a rack bar engaging said pinion at substantially right angles to the pinion, a first yoke received in said opening for axially slidable movement therein with one end of said yoke facing said rack bar, a ring secured to or facing the other end of said first yoke, a yoke stopper fitted in said opening facing said ring, a first spring interposed between said

ring and yoke stopper to normally bias said first yoke towards said rack bar, a second yoke disposed within said first yoke and having at one end a roller adapted to abut against said rack bar and a
5 second spring interposed between the other end of said second yoke and said yoke stopper to normally bias the second yoke towards said rack bar.

2. The steering mechanism for an automobile as set forth in Claim 1, further including a third
10 spring interposed between said first and second yokes for normally biasing said first yoke towards said rack bar.

3. A steering mechanism for an automobile, substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to the accompanying drawings.
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